

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HELSIN 01731 101258Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 1731

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PINT, FI
SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS: CONVERSATION WITH PRE-
SIDENT KEKKONEN

FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF MY CREDENTIALS ON FRIDAY,
AUGUST 5, I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A BRIEF CONVERSATION
WITH PRESIDENT KEKKONEN. THE OCCASION WAS ONE WHICH
INSPIRED ONLY A GENERAL EXCHANGE BUT THE AGENDA AND SOME
OF THE CONTENT MAY BE OF INTEREST.

1. FINLAND'S ECONOMY. THE PRESIDENT APOLOGIZED FOR
BEGINNING ON A "PESSIMISTIC" NOTE AND DESCRIBED FINLAND'S
MAJOR CONCERNS AT PRESENT AS BEING ECONOMIC. HE SAID I
WOULD FIND FINLAND POORER THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN WHICH
I HAD SERVED AND THAT EVEN IN THE AREA OF OCEAN RESOURCES
FINLAND HAD NO SPECIAL BLESSINGS. AS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES
OF FINLAND'S SIZE, THE DECISIONS OF MORE IMPORTANT
COUNTRIES (THE "MAJOR POWERS") WILL DETERMINE THE PACE AT
WHICH FINLAND'S ECONOMY RECOVERS. HE REFERRED WITH
MYSTERY TO "PRIVATE CHANNELS" THROUGH WHICH HE HAD
LEARNED THERE WAS REASON TO EXPECT A TURNAROUND IN
THE GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION WHICH WOULD IN A
SHORT TIME GIVE A MORE POSITIVE FACE TO FINLAND'S
ECONOMIC SITUATION.

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2. FINLAND'S SECURITY POLICY. THE PRESIDENT SAID
HE HOPED I WOULD SOON COME TO UNDERSTAND FINLAND AND
ITS PEOPLE. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT, SETTING ASIDE THE
CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC CONCERNS, I WOULD FIND THAT IN
TERMS OF DISADVANTAGE IT WAS FINLAND'S GEOGRAPHY WHICH
MADE IT MOST DISADVANTAGED. HE SAID MANY FOREIGN
OBSERVERS DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANT FOR

FINLAND NOR DID THEY UNDERSTAND THE POLICIES WHICH PROCEEDED FROM IT. I TOOK THIS AS A THINLY-VEILED REFERENCE TO A RECENT COLUMN BY WILLIAM BUCKLEY WHICH HAS HAD A DEGREE OF PLAY HERE AND WHICH FLATLY ASSIGNED FINLAND TO THE SOVIET ORBIT. I REMARKED THAT AMERICAN JOURNALISTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN WRITINGS, BUT I WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE EMBASSY AND THOSE IN WASHINGTON WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THE U.S.-FINLAND RELATIONSHIP UNDERSTAND THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAKE UP FINLAND'S SECURITY POLICY AS WELL AS ITS SOPHISTICATED NATURE. THE PRESIDENT THANKED ME FOR THE STATEMENT AND SAID THAT HE OF COURSE WAS NOT RAISING THE ISSUE OFFICIALLY. INDEED HE THOUGHT THIS WAS ONE OF THE FEW OCCASIONS WHEN WE COULD BE INFORMAL AND WITHOUT OBJECTIVITY.

3. U.S.-FINNISH RELATIONS. NOTING THAT FINLAND WAS NOT SEEKING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES TO ADDRESS ITS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THAT THE VIEWS OF JOURNALISTS WERE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF GOVERNMENTS, PRESIDENT KEKKONEN WENT ON TO SAY HE BELIEVED THERE WERE "NO ISSUES ON THE TABLE" BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND FINLAND AS I TAKE UP MY MISSION IN FINLAND. HE THOUGHT OUR MUTUAL TASK WOULD BE TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

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4. WOMEN'S RIGHTS. AT THAT POINT, FOLLOWING AN EXCHANGE IN FINNISH AMONG THE PRESIDENT, ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER GESTRIN, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, AND A FEMALE INTERPRETER, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH MIGHT ARISE AND ON WHICH FINLAND HAD A HOPE OF WINNING WAS THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN CAREER DIPLOMACY. THE PRESIDENT MAINTAINED THAT FINLAND HAD MORE FEMALE CAREER AMBASSADORS THAN THE UNITED STATES. I DID NOT DISPUTE HIS TALLY BUT SUGGESTED THAT FINLAND CERTAINLY COULD COME OUT AHEAD ON CROSS-COUNTRY SKIERS AND LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS. MAINTAINING THE LIGHT TONE, THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE 1907 DECISION ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BUT COMMENTED THAT THE MEN HAD BEEN IN CHARGE EVEN THEN. I SAID THAT IN THE COURSE OF THE INTERVIEWS I HAD HAD WITH THE MAJOR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, I HAD OFTEN BEEN ASKED WHAT MESSAGE I WAS BRINGING FROM THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA. I HAD REPLIED CONSISTENTLY, AS THE PRESIDENT KNEW, THAT THERE WAS NO MESSAGE, THE THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED AHD ALREADY BEEN LEARNED IN FINLAND. AT THIS POINT THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT WHILE EACH OF US HAD PROBABLY

HAD TO RAISE THE SUBJECT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS BECAUSE
IT WAS EXPECTED THAT WE WOULD DO SO, HE HOPED THAT WE
COULD NOW AGREE THAT, AS BETWEEN THE TWO OF US IT HAD
BEEN THOUOUGHLY DISCUSS.

5. THE PRESIDENT CONCLUDED THE CONVERSATION BY
OFFERING TO MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE ON ANY OCCASION
WHEN I THOUGH IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO SEE HIM. I
SAID THAT I, TOO, WAS PREPARED, AS WERE ALL THE
MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY STAFF, TO BE OF ASSISTANCE
WHENEVER WE COULD. AT THAT POINT WE RETURNED
TO THE CEREMONIES AT HAND.RIDGWAY

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